

Wisconsin Department of Transportation

# ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION OF FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS

<b>Project I.D.</b> 1051-01-02	<b>Funding Source</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State Only <input type="checkbox"/> Federal
<b>Project Termini</b> I-94 to in Dunn County to County T in Chippewa County. Approximately 9.25 miles (14.88 km).  <b>Highway:</b> WIS 29  <b>County:</b> Chippewa and Dunn Counties	<b>Federal Number</b> N/A
	<b>Estimated Project Cost (Include R/W Acquisition)</b> \$10,902,000

<p>It is determined, after review of the comments from the public, and coordination with other agencies, that this action would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. This document is a</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environmental Assessment (EA) No Significant Impacts Indicated by Initial Assessment</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Assessment (EA) EIS Required</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Report (2-ER)</p>
<p>X _____ (Date) _____</p> <p>X _____ (Date) _____</p> <p>X _____ (Date) _____  <input type="checkbox"/> District, <input type="checkbox"/> Aero, <input type="checkbox"/> Rails &amp; Harbors</p> <p>X _____ (Date) _____  (Director, Bureau of Environment)</p> <p>X _____ (Date) _____  <input type="checkbox"/> FHWA <input type="checkbox"/> FAA <input type="checkbox"/> FTA <input type="checkbox"/> FRA</p>	<p>X _____ (Date) _____</p> <p>X _____ (Date) _____</p> <p>X _____ (Date) _____  <input type="checkbox"/> District, <input type="checkbox"/> Aero, <input type="checkbox"/> Rails &amp; Harbors</p> <p>X _____ (Date) _____  (Director, Bureau of Environment)</p> <p>X _____ (Date) _____  <input type="checkbox"/> FHWA <input type="checkbox"/> FAA <input type="checkbox"/> FTA <input type="checkbox"/> FRA</p>

## **1) Description of Proposed Action (Attach project location map and other appropriate graphics).**

The Proposed Action would officially convert and designate WIS 29 from a four-lane divided highway facility (at-grade intersections) to a freeway (no at-grade access) through the process established in Chapter 84, Section 295 of the Wisconsin State Statutes (Wis. Stat. 84.295). Wis. Stat. 84.295 is a long-term official mapping and planning tool available to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) to help protect and preserve right-of-way for future transportation needs. This proactive tool allows WisDOT to address safety, operation, mobility, and capacity issues in advance of impending long-term needs.

The Proposed Action would convert WIS 29 to a freeway between I-94 and County T, a distance of approximately 9.25 miles (14.88 km) (see Exhibit 1, Project Location Map). The Proposed Action is located in both Dunn and Chippewa Counties. The freeway conversion process would include the conversion of at-grade public and private intersections on WIS 29. The existing at-grade intersections would be reconstructed to cul-de-sacs, overpasses, and/or local road connections; thereby converting and officially designating WIS 29 as a freeway. The existing interchanges at I-94/WIS 29, WIS 29/WIS 12/WIS 40, and WIS 29/County T would remain unaltered as would the existing frontage road on the north side of existing WIS 29.

From County T east to WIS 27, WIS 29 is already constructed as a freeway section. The Proposed Action is consistent with the ultimate envisioned plan (Corridors 2020 Backbone Route) for the highway facility; no capacity improvements to the four-lane facility are planned as part of the Proposed Action.

It is also important to note that there is no conversion dollars programmed or available at this time. There is not an immediate need to construct the Proposed Action at this time. Improvements and funding would be sought at a later time when needed. The Proposed Action is a long-term, proactive planning initiative to preserve future right-of-way to convert WIS 29 to a freeway. The Proposed Action would use a long-term vision and management strategy so that when WIS 29 improvements become necessary, a system-wide, comprehensive approach can be applied to the corridor.

## **2) Purpose and need of Proposed Action. Include description of existing facilities, abutting facilities, and how the action links into the overall transportation system. When appropriate, show that commitment for future work is not being made without evaluation, and that viable alternatives in a larger framework are not being unduly foreclosed.**

WIS 29 is classified as a principal arterial highway, meaning it serves interstate and interregional trips. WIS 29 also designated as a “backbone” route in the WisDOT Corridors 2020 plan. The Corridors 2020 plan seeks to interconnect major population and economic centers in all regions of the state and link them to the national transportation network. As a Corridors 2020 backbone route, WIS 29 is envisioned to be improved to a four-lane divided facility providing uninterrupted traffic flow from I-94 near the city of Menominee to the city of Green Bay. Construction of this project is expected to be completed in the fall of 2005.

WIS 29 functions as the primary route across north-central Wisconsin, linking the city of Green Bay to the east with I-94 and Minneapolis/St. Paul to the west. Current traffic volumes make WIS 29 the state's most heavily traveled east-west highway north of I-94. WIS 29 will be affected by higher traffic volumes and assume greater importance for the region once the US 53 bypass of the city of Eau Claire is completed in the next few years. WIS 29 also carries a high volume of truck traffic that illustrates its importance to Wisconsin's industry, business, and agriculture.

As the primary east-west route, there are statewide economic benefits realized with a more efficient highway network. Transportation costs and access to high-quality four-lane highways have long been recognized as factors affecting business location decisions. Businesses depending on highway transportation desire locations on or near highways that provide safe and efficient access to suppliers and markets. Reductions in travel time and transportation costs can help companies improve their competitive position, market presence, and profitability. Tourism may increase as tourists gain increased access to vacation and recreation areas. The ultimate impact of all these economic benefits would be to generate more jobs and income for Wisconsin residents.

## **Purpose and Need**

The project purpose and need can be divided into the following components for discussion purposes:

- Corridor Preservation
- Safety, Operation, and Mobility
- Land Use/Transportation Planning and Coordination

### **Corridor Preservation**

WIS 29 is classified in the WisDOT's Corridors 2020 plan as a "backbone" route giving it high importance and priority within the state's transportation system. Improving WIS 29 to a four-lane facility was a multi-million dollar investment over 20 years in the making. Ideally, the freeway conversion for this segment would have been completed concurrently with the WIS 29 expansion from two- to four-lanes in the mid-1990's and early 2000's. However, limited highway funds precluded this action at the time. Because the future availability of freeway conversion funding was unknown, the decision was made to move forward with the two- to four-lane capacity expansion to enhance safety and mobility as soon as possible.

As a principal arterial, WIS 29's function is to provide mobility, both from state and regional perspectives. Access points that are well managed and limited in number are two of the defining characteristics of a principal arterial. Limiting access improves safety, operation, mobility, and capacity by restricting where vehicles enter and exit the highway and reducing conflict points. Under the Proposed Action, access to WIS 29 would be provided solely at interchanges, as public and private at-grade intersections and driveways would be eliminated.

The study segment of WIS 29 is currently has numerous access points, including several intersecting highways (I-94, US 12/WIS 40, County H (N & S), County M, County T), numerous local roads, and three private intersections. Under the Proposed Action, direct access to WIS 29 would only occur at interchanges. If access to WIS 29 is not effectively managed, the long-term result would likely be a degradation of safety and the level of service and safety provided by the recently improved WIS 29. Limiting access only to interchanges would maintain the corridor investment by providing a safer facility for both regional and local traffic and improving mobility on the study segment. If the safety and/or the level of service on the segment decline, the result would be a diminishing return on the corridor investment. Through the implementation of Wis. Stats. 84.295, the Proposed Action would help protect and preserve WIS 29 through a proactive rather than a reactive corridor management plan.

### **Safety, Operation, and Mobility**

The second component of the purpose and need is to preserve and enhance the long-term safety, operation, and mobility of WIS 29. Current traffic volumes range from 7,300 AADT near I-94 to 8,200 AADT near County T. Traffic on WIS 29 between I-94 and County T is expected to increase to 13,000 AADT by 2025 (see Appendix A, Traffic Forecast Report). Once the city of Eau Claire freeway (US 53) is completed and system relationships between WIS 29 and US 53 are further developed, traffic on WIS 29 could increase sooner than anticipated.

There is a direct relationship between increased traffic volumes and vehicle conflicts when direct access exists on a facility. Currently there are 10 public intersections and 3 private driveways with access to WIS 29 in the project study area. As currently configured, movements to/from the intersecting roads or driveways disrupt the flow of traffic as vehicles merge, diverge, and/or cross WIS 29. The magnitude of the mobility disruption is heightened when semi-truck traffic or agricultural equipment is considered. Without proactive corridor management, increased crashes can be expected, especially side-swipe, angle, and rear end crashes, which are commonly associated with access/mobility challenges.

Local land development is also a factor as to how WIS 29 functions into the future. It is not uncommon for land development pressures to significantly increase once a road has been expanded from two- to four- lanes. WIS 29 is no exception. With the construction of four lanes in the mid-1990's and early 2000's, the additional capacity has brought both increased traffic and accessibility to the area. These are critical elements that invite land development pressures. Though much of the land along WIS 29 is currently rural and agricultural in nature, land development pressures could incrementally convert the area to more intensive uses, particularly around the existing at-grade intersections. Development pressures currently exist at both WIS 29/County H (S) (at-grade intersection) and WIS 29/County T (interchange). Future land development, and its associated traffic would

likely compound safety, operation, and mobility challenges along the corridor over time. One of the challenges includes difficulties for side road traffic in finding sufficient gaps in the WIS 29 traffic to access or cross the highway. As traffic movements become increasingly difficult, drivers engage in more risk-taking movements that may inhibit mobility and compromise the safety of WIS 29. As traffic and land development pressures along WIS 29 change over time, WIS 29 must also adapt to safely accommodate those changes.

### **Land Use/Transportation Planning and Coordination**

The third component of the purpose and need is to coordinate the State's transportation planning effort with local comprehensive planning initiatives. Commonly recognized as Wisconsin's "Smart Growth" legislation, significant changes to planning-related statutes were approved through the 1999-2001 state biennial budget. There are various definitions for the term Smart Growth, however for Wisconsin, the statutes focus on the development and implementation of local comprehensive plans. A new grant program for comprehensive planning was also established to provide local governments with financial assistance for the preparation of comprehensive plans. Smart Growth for Wisconsin ensures that by 2010, every city, village, county and town in the state will be guided by a comprehensive plan as defined by state statutes.

The communities of the WIS 29 study area are included in this state mandate. Because none of the communities directly located on WIS 29 have adopted a plan that is consistent with the Smart Growth legislation, they will soon need to initiate Smart Growth planning to meet the 2010 deadline. The village of Elk Mound has recently completed its comprehensive plan but is not directly adjacent to the corridor.

A collaborative planning effort between the local units of government and WisDOT addressing transportation improvements would be beneficial to both parties. Access changes to WIS 29 would be a significant factor in local land use planning initiatives. From the state's perspective, identifying local land use priorities would help guide the freeway conversion process as well as manage the timing of future improvements. Intensification of land uses between I-94 and the city of Chippewa Falls is occurring and is expected to increase over time. Identifying where cul-de-sacs, overpasses, interchanges, and enhanced local road connections would be located would enhance land use and transportation planning at the local level.

One principal benefit of this coordination is to provide certainty to both property owners and local communities as to the location and future right-of-way needed for freeway conversion improvements to WIS 29. Improvement footprints would be identified and preserved through Wis. Stats. 84.295 as part of the Proposed Action. Such certainty would help minimize costly relocations and/or disruptions to property owners. It would also ensure future land uses and/or developments would not preclude or be incompatible with freeway conversion improvements. In sum, collaboration between local land use and state highway planning efforts would help provide a sufficient and proactive balance of land use and transportation, thereby maximizing local and state planning efforts.

### **3) Summary of the alternatives considered and if they are not proposed for adoption, why not. (Identify which, if any, of the alternatives is the preferred alternative.)**

Three build alternatives and one no-build alternative were considered and are described below:

#### **Alternative A - Maintain Existing Interchanges with Overpasses of WIS 29/County H (S)/906<sup>th</sup> St. and WIS 29/10<sup>th</sup>/1010<sup>th</sup> St., and WIS 29/40<sup>th</sup> St.**

This alternative would include alterations to the existing WIS 29 access in the project study area. Alternative A would improve safety, operation, and mobility by eliminating at-grade access to WIS 29. Access would remain at the existing interchanges (I-94/WIS 29, US 12/WIS 40/WIS 29, and WIS 29/County T). North/south traffic circulation would be accommodated by the construction of three new overpasses (see Exhibit 2, Project Alternatives).

The new overpasses would be located at WIS 29/County H (S)/Woodland Dr., WIS 29/10<sup>th</sup>/1010<sup>th</sup> St., and WIS 29/40<sup>th</sup> St. The overpass at WIS 29/County H (S)/906<sup>th</sup> St. would facilitate north/south traffic circulation for the village and town of Elk Mound and Dunn County in general. The overpass at WIS 29/10<sup>th</sup>/1010<sup>th</sup> St. would provide a north/south connection at the county line as well as enhance circulation for agricultural industries, vehicles, and equipment. The final overpass at WIS 29/40<sup>th</sup> St. would provide additional circulation and crossings of WIS 29 in Chippewa County. This overpass would also help maintain efficient emergency service by providing a convenient north/south connection for the town of Wheaton fire station.

Existing access to the north frontage road and south frontage road (located between 20<sup>th</sup> St. and 40<sup>th</sup> St.) would be maintained as part of the Proposed Action. Southern properties could also use the proposed overpasses to access the north frontage road for east/west mobility. Access to/from WIS 29 would be accommodated at the existing interchanges.

See [Table 1](#), Alternatives Summary Matrix, for a complete comprehensive summary of the alternative.

Alternative A is not proposed for adoption.

**Alternative B - Maintain Existing Interchanges with Overpasses of WIS 29/County H (N)/970<sup>th</sup> St., WIS 29/40<sup>th</sup> St., and Map an Interchange Footprint at WIS 29/County H (N) if Warranted/Needed**

This alternative would include alterations to the existing WIS 29 access in the project study area. Alternative B would improve safety, operation, and mobility by eliminating non-interchange access to WIS 29. Access would remain at the existing interchanges (I-94/WIS 29, US 12/40/WIS 29, and WIS 29/County T). North/south traffic circulation would be accommodated by the construction of two new overpasses, one of which could be mapped as a future interchange at a later point (see Exhibit 2, Project Alternatives).

The overpasses would be located at WIS 29/County H (N)/970<sup>th</sup> St. and WIS 29/40<sup>th</sup> St. The overpass at WIS 29/County H (N)/970<sup>th</sup> St. would facilitate north/south traffic circulation for the village and town of Elk Mound and Dunn County in general. In conjunction with the construction of this overpass, a new local road connection between County H (S) and 970<sup>th</sup> St would be constructed for circulation to/from the grade-separation and the village of Elk Mound. The second overpass at WIS 29/40<sup>th</sup> St. would provide additional circulation and crossings of WIS 29 in Chippewa County. This overpass would also help maintain efficient emergency service by providing a convenient north/south connection for the town of Wheaton fire station.

Existing access to the north frontage road and south frontage road (located between 20<sup>th</sup> St. and 40<sup>th</sup> St.) would be maintained as part of the Proposed Action. Southern properties could also use the proposed overpasses to access the north frontage road for east/west mobility. Access to/from WIS 29 would be accommodated at the existing interchanges.

Alternative B also includes the possibility of the preserving a future interchange footprint at the WIS 29/County H (N)/970<sup>th</sup> St. overpass if the need could be demonstrated by the local units of government. If one were proven to be warranted/needed, the most appropriate location for a potential interchange was based on two criteria. The first criterion is the maintenance of adequate interchange spacing. To maximize safety and minimize conflicts between merging and diverging traffic, rural interchange spacing guidelines require a minimum of two miles (3.2 km) between interchanges. The second criterion was the proximity of the potential interchange to area traffic generators, traffic circulation patterns, and system-wide need. WIS 29/County H (N)/970<sup>th</sup> St. was determined to be the only location using existing roads that balanced the spacing concerns and that still had the capability of providing future system-wide benefits for the region.

Alternative B, as conceived, accommodates the possibility of a mapping a future interchange footprint in the long-term but does not plan for the construction as part of the Proposed Action. Based on future land use plans, it was determined that a new interchange at WIS 29/County H (N)/970<sup>th</sup> St. was not warranted/needed at this time or anytime in the foreseeable future. Construction of an interchange at this location would only be considered if/when local development necessitates access to WIS 29 in order to maintain efficient traffic flow and circulation within the study area. At this time, the existing land use plan for the village of Elk Mound (which is not directly adjacent to WIS 29) does not sufficiently demonstrate a need for a new interchange. The town of Elk Mound does not currently have a land use plan. If an interchange at this location were ever to be pursued, an environmental document would likely be required at that time. This document does not address the environmental consequences of a future interchange at this location.

See [Table 1](#), Alternatives Summary Matrix, for a complete comprehensive summary of the alternative.

Alternative B is not proposed for adoption.

**Alternative C - Maintain Existing Interchanges with Overpasses of WIS 29/County H (S)/906<sup>th</sup> St., WIS 29/County H (N)/970<sup>th</sup> St., and WIS 29/10<sup>th</sup>/1010<sup>th</sup> St., and WIS 29/40<sup>th</sup> St.**

This alternative would include alterations to the existing WIS 29 access in the project study area. Alternative C would improve safety, operation, and mobility by eliminating non-interchange access to WIS 29. Access would remain at the existing interchanges (I-94/WIS 29, US 12/WIS 40/WIS 29, and WIS 29/County T). North/south traffic circulation would be accommodated by the construction of four new overpasses (see Exhibit 2, Project Alternatives).

The new overpasses would be located at WIS 29/County H (S)/906<sup>th</sup> St., WIS 29/County H (N)/970<sup>th</sup> St., WIS 29/10<sup>th</sup>/1010<sup>th</sup> St., and WIS 29/40<sup>th</sup> St. The overpasses at WIS 29/County H (S)/906<sup>th</sup> St., and WIS 29/County H (N)/970<sup>th</sup> St. would facilitate north/south traffic circulation and provide crossings of WIS 29 for the village and town of Elk Mound and Dunn County in general. The overpass at WIS 29/10<sup>th</sup>/1010<sup>th</sup> St. would provide a north/south connection at the county line as well as enhance circulation for agricultural industries, vehicles, and equipment in the area. The fourth overpass at WIS 29/40<sup>th</sup> St. would provide additional circulation in Chippewa County. This overpass would also help maintain efficient emergency service by providing a convenient north/south connection for the town of Wheaton fire station.

Existing access to the north frontage road and south frontage road (located between 20<sup>th</sup> St. and 40<sup>th</sup> St.) would be maintained as part of the Proposed Action. Southern properties could also use the proposed overpasses to access the north frontage road for east/west mobility. Access to/from WIS 29 would be accommodated at the existing interchanges.

Alternative C was developed during the study process and was the result of extensive public input and intergovernmental coordination. In the study's initial stages, Alternatives A and B were the only build alternatives being considered. However, Alternatives A and B were ultimately found to be undesirable to either the local units of government and/or WisDOT after lengthy coordination and evaluation. A hybrid of the two alternatives was conceived and took form in Alternative C. The inclusion of a fourth overpass to Alternative A at County H (N)/970<sup>th</sup> St. was the major alteration from Alternative A. In addition, the local units of government indicated that they may consider officially mapping a possible future interchange footprint at this location, even though it was determined by WisDOT, and understood by the local units of government, that it is not currently warranted/needed from traffic, land use, and system-wide perspectives. The official mapping of a future interchange footprint and/or the interchange concept itself at WIS 29/County H (N)/970<sup>th</sup> St., is not included as part of the Proposed Action or Environmental Assessment. However, any such initiative in the future would likely need to be addressed in an environmental assessment or other approved environmental analysis.

Alternative C is proposed for adoption and has been selected as the Preferred Alternative/Proposed Action.

**No-Build Alternative**

This alternative would simply include routine maintenance procedures without any improvements or alterations to the existing corridor. The No-Build Alternative would perpetuate all of the problems associated with the current corridor including declining safety, operation, and mobility on WIS 29. The No-Build Alternative also would not serve as a catalyst for collaborative transportation and land use planning between WisDOT and the local units of government. The No-Build Alternative is the least desirable of the alternatives and would not fulfill the project purpose and need.

The No-Build Alternative is not proposed for adoption because it fails to meet the project's purpose and need. The No-Build Alternative would not maintain the investment in the WIS 29 corridor. Safety, operation, and mobility challenges would continue to increase as local traffic and development conflict with regional through traffic. Finally, the No-Build Alternative offers little guidance on WisDOT's long-term strategy for the WIS 29 corridor, thus creating additional uncertainty for local land use planning initiatives. While the No-Build Alternative does not meet the project purpose and need, it does serve as a baseline for a comparison of impacts related to the Preferred Alternative.

**Alternative Analysis and Selection of the Preferred Alternative**

Alternative C is proposed for adoption and has been identified as the Preferred Alternative/Proposed Action.

As indicated under Alternative C, the selection of the Preferred Alternative occurred during a lengthy public

outreach and intergovernmental coordination. Initially, only two build alternatives (Alternatives A & B) were proposed and determined to meet project purpose and need. However, neither WisDOT nor the local units of government could come to consensus as to the final selection of the Preferred Alternative. Two primary issues remained unresolved between WisDOT and the local units of government:

- 1) The town and village of Elk Mound expressed interest in having additional traffic circulation opportunities across WIS 29 and proposed an additional overpass for consideration (one more overpass than Alternative A). An additional overpass would further maximize local traffic circulation options between the north and south sides of WIS 29. Local traffic circulation was an important local consideration particularly with respect to emergency response times and ease of accessing the frontage road on the north side of WIS 29. In addition, the local units of government and local property owners documented a need to provide an additional north/south connection at the county line to enhance circulation for agricultural industries, vehicles, and equipment in the area.  
After additional coordination and evaluation, WisDOT found the request for an additional overpass to be reasonable and was included as a component of the newly developed Alternative C.
- 2) The town and village of Elk Mound expressed an desire in having WisDOT officially map a future interchange footprint at WIS 29/County H (N)/906<sup>th</sup> St. as part of the Wis. Stats. 84.295 process. WisDOT has determined that a future interchange at this location is not needed/warranted in the future from traffic, land use, and/or system-wide perspectives and would not be mapped as part of the Proposed Action.

However, the town and village of Elk Mound indicated that they may want to officially map and preserve the overpass as an interchange to accommodate the possibility if the need ever arose in the future. The town of Elk Mound is considering officially mapping the interchange footprint as a locally-initiated effort. WisDOT agreed to this approach so long as the interchange was mapped by the local units of government and was not included as part of the Preferred Alternative or environmental document. However, any such initiative in the future would likely need to be addressed in an environmental assessment or other approved environmental analysis (see Appendix B, WIS 29/County H (N)/906<sup>th</sup> St. Interchange Correspondence).

The local units of government were agreeable with the provisions of Alternative C and its selection as the Preferred Alternative/Proposed Action (see Exhibit 3, Alternative C – Preferred Alternative, and Exhibit 4, Typical Sections).

**Table 1, Alternatives Summary Matrix**

<b>Table 1, Alternatives Summary Matrix</b>			
	<b>Alternatives</b>		
<b>Intersecting Roads</b>	<b>Alternative A:</b> Maintain Existing Interchanges with Overpasses of WIS 29/County H (S)/906 <sup>th</sup> St., WIS 29/10 <sup>th</sup> /1010 <sup>th</sup> St., and WIS 29/40 <sup>th</sup> St.	<b>Alternative B:</b> Maintain Existing Interchanges with Overpasses at County H (N)/970 <sup>th</sup> St and WIS 29/40 <sup>th</sup> St., and Map an Interchange Footprint at County H (N)/970 <sup>th</sup> St. if Warranted/Needed	<b>Alternative C:</b> Maintain Existing Interchanges with Overpasses of WIS 29/County H (S)/906 <sup>th</sup> St, WIS 29/County H (N)/970 <sup>th</sup> St., WIS 29/10 <sup>th</sup> /1010 <sup>th</sup> St., and WIS 29/40 <sup>th</sup> St.
I-94/WIS 29 Interchange	Interchange access remains	Interchange access remains	Interchange access remains
US 12/WIS 40/WIS 29 Interchange	Interchange access remains	Interchange access remains	Interchange access remains
WIS 29/County H (S)/ 906 <sup>th</sup> St	Overpass	Cul-de-sac on south, frontage road access on north	Overpass

WIS 29/County H (N)/ 970th St.	Frontage road access on north, cul-de-sac on south	Overpass with provisions for possible new interchange if warranted/needed	Overpass
WIS 29/10th/1010th St.	Overpass	Access to frontage road on north, cul-de-sac on south	Overpass
WIS 29/20th St.	Access to frontage road on north, access to frontage road on south	Access to frontage road on north, access to frontage road on south	Access to frontage road on north, access to frontage road on south
WIS 29/County M/30 <sup>th</sup> St.	Access to frontage roads only	Access to frontage roads only	Access to frontage roads only
WIS 29/40th St.	Overpass	Overpass	Overpass
WIS 29/50th St.	Cul-de-sac on both sides	Cul-de-sac on both sides	Cul-de-sac on both sides
WIS 29/County T Interchange	Interchange access remains	Interchange access remains	Interchange access remains
WIS 29/Three private access points	Access removed	Access removed	Access removed

**4) In general terms, briefly discuss the construction and operational energy requirements and conservation potential of the various alternatives under consideration. Indicate whether the savings in operational energy are greater than the energy required to construct the facility.**

Energy requirements for construction of the Preferred Alternative would be greater than those required for the No-Build Alternative.

However, the No-Build Alternative would perpetuate the use of an inefficient transportation system, resulting in more congestion, loss of time, higher consumption of energy, and increased crashes and safety problems. Over the design life of the facility, savings in operational energy would be greater than the energy required to construct the facility and thus in the long-term would result in net savings in energy usage.

**5) Describe existing land use (attach land use maps if available).**

**a) Land use in immediate area.**

The project study area lies in the town of Elk Mound in Dunn County and the town of Wheaton in Chippewa County. The land use adjacent to the WIS 29 corridor is relatively consistent between the two towns. Land use is predominately agriculture with wetlands and uplands found intermittently along the corridor. Developed uses in the immediate area include an auto salvage yard, trailer sales facility, and local fire station.

The agricultural land is primarily row-crops that support dairy operations. A few farmhouses are located along the WIS 29 corridor. The wetlands in the project study area consist of two main classes – emergent wet meadow and broad-leaved deciduous forest. In Chippewa County, the Elk Creek and its associated wetlands cross WIS 29 just east of the county line. In Dunn County, a wetlands complex associated with an unnamed tributary to the Elk Creek runs parallel to WIS 29.

Existing resources in the vicinity of the Proposed Action are depicted in Exhibit 5, Existing Resources.

**b) Land use in area surrounding project area.**

The land use in the area surrounding the project study area is very similar to that of the immediate area. Agricultural uses dominate the landscape (see Exhibit 5, Existing Resources). Row crops and dairy farms are scattered throughout the area.

The village of Elk Mound is approximately 1.5 miles (2.41 km) south of WIS 29. The village has a small urbanized area and provides emergency services and K-12 schools for the region.

The city of Eau Claire is located approximately 12 miles (19.3 km) southeast of the project study area and is a

regional commercial, industrial, employment and retail hub. Other nearby employment and economic centers include the city of Chippewa Falls approximately eight miles (12.9 km) to the east and the city of Menominee approximately nine miles (14.5 km) to the west.

**6) Briefly identify adopted plans for the area and discuss whether the Proposed Action is compatible with the plan. (For example, the following may be considered: Regional Planning Commission Plans, Transportation Improvement Program, State Transportation Improvement Plan, Local zoning and land use plans, DOT Storm Water Management Plans, Others).**

The village of Elk Mound has recently completed a draft comprehensive plan that includes updated zoning and land use maps. Both maps indicate that the village will attempt to cluster future development near the existing urbanized core. The future land use map indicates that no development would occur north of Elk Mound Drive which is located approximately one mile (1.6 km) south of WIS 29.

The planning area for the Village of Elk Mound Future Land Use Map extends from the existing municipal limits north to WIS 29 and east to the county line (see Exhibit 6, Village of Elk Mound Future Land Use). This plan calls for nearly all of the land in the planning area that is not currently zoned for development to remain agricultural. Because the Proposed Action would remove direct access to WIS 29 from intersecting roads, the attractiveness of the land adjacent to WIS 29 for highway-dependent development would be greatly reduced helping maintain agricultural land use. The construction of three overpasses near the village of Elk Mound would also help maintain the viability of local agricultural interests. The overpasses would allow farm vehicles to access land and buildings on both sides of WIS 29 without conflicting with state highway traffic. The overpasses of WIS 29 would create a safer traveling environment for local and state transportation system users by separating agricultural, local, and regional through traffic.

The existing interchanges would continue to provide the same level of accessibility to the village as currently exists. Traffic would continue to have access to the principal highways that access the village (I-94, US 12, and US 40). It appears that the village intends to focus its future development towards the south side of the village limits between I-94 and US 12. The Proposed Action would have little effect on planned development in this area and thus is compatible with the Village of Elk Mound Comprehensive Plan.

The towns of Elk Mound and Wheaton have not prepared comprehensive plans and as such, the Proposed Action cannot be compared to local planning efforts in these communities. In addition, the town of Elk Mound is currently engaged in developing a comprehensive plan and will not have zoning regulations in place until the plan is completed. The town of Wheaton falls under Chippewa County general zoning regulations.

The Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative) is consistent with (and/or does not conflict with) the following plans and land use controls/regulations for the communities in the project area:

**Plan Name**

Draft Village of Elk Mound Comprehensive Plan  
Elk Creek Fishery Area Master Plan Concept Element  
Chippewa County Land and Water Resource Management Plan  
Dunn County Agriculture Preservation Plan  
Dunn County Land and Water Resource Plan  
Wisconsin State Highway Plan 2020

**Agency & Year**

Village of Elk Mound (2001)  
WDNR (1980)  
Chippewa County (2001)  
Dunn County (1981)  
Dunn County (2000)  
WisDOT (2000)

The following land use controls and regulations are in-force for the project study area with the exception of the town of Elk Mound, Dunn County:

**Land Use Control**

Chippewa County Land Division Ordinance  
Chippewa County Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance  
Dunn County Zoning Ordinance  
Dunn County Subdivision Regulations

**Agency & Year**

Chippewa County (2001)  
Chippewa County (2001)  
Dunn County (1993)  
Dunn County (1993)

**7) Early coordination with Agencies.****a) Intra-Agency Coordination****i) Bureau of Aeronautics**

☒ **No** – Coordination is not required. Project is not located within 2 miles (3.22 kilometers) of a public or military use airport nor would the project change the horizontal or vertical alignment of a transportation facility located within 6.44 kilometers (4 miles) of a public use or military airport.

☐ **Yes** – Coordination has been completed and project effects have been addressed. Explain:

**ii) District Office Real Estate Section**

☐ **No** – Coordination is not required because no inhabited houses or active businesses will be acquired.

☒ **Yes** – Coordination has been completed. Project effects and relocation assistance have been addressed. Conceptual Stage Relocation Program Plan attached as Appendix C.

**b) Interagency Coordination**

STATE AGENCY	COORDINATION  Attached? Y-Yes N-No	COMMENTS  Explain or give results. If no correspondence is attached to this document, indicate when coordination with the agency was initiated and, if available, when coordination was completed.
<b>Agriculture (DATCP)</b>	N	Opportunity for review and comment was extended to DATCP as part of the formal scoping process. A coordination meeting was also held with DATCP on April 3, 2003. DATCP determined that the Proposed Action was compatible with existing agricultural practices in the corridor and would likely assist in preserving agricultural activities in the future. Due to the nature and timeframe for implementation of the Proposed Action, DATCP did not feel further coordination beyond normal documentation would be required. An Agricultural Impact Statement may be required closer to final design/construction of the Proposed Action.
<b>Natural Resources (WDNR)</b>	Y	WDNR was consulted for input at all phases of the project and has identified the following areas of special concern, including wetlands (RPE, RPF, and SM), and rare species (Karner Blue Butterfly, Blanding's Turtle and Wood Turtle). WDNR has indicated that they would support the Proposed Action. Other issues that WDNR was consulted with include: endangered resources, wetland effects, upland habitat and landforms, and state-owned property. WDNR will continue to work closely with WisDOT in the remaining phases of the project to avoid and minimize adverse environmental affects associated with the Proposed Action.  See Appendix D, WDNR Correspondence
<b>State Historical Society (SHS)</b>	N	SHS has been consulted as part of the formal scoping process.
<b>Public Service Commission (PSC)</b>	N	The PSC was extended an opportunity to comment as part of the scoping process. Agency officials indicated that the local utilities should be contacted for input relating to services located in the study area. Local utilities have been contacted as part of the scoping and public involvement process.
<b>Chippewa County Highway Department</b>	N	The Chippewa County Highway Department was given the opportunity to provide comments through all phases of the project. Highway officials were invited to participate in all local official meetings as well as all public information meetings.
<b>Chippewa County Local Emergency Planning Committee</b>	N	The Chippewa County Local Emergency Planning Committee was given the opportunity to provide comments through all phases of the project.
<b>Chippewa Fire Protection District</b>	Y	Representatives of the Chippewa Fire Protection District Wheaton Fire Station were invited to participate at all phases of the project. Officials indicated that major infrastructure investments have recently been made to the Wheaton Fire Station making it unlikely that the station would be moved in the near future. Because the location of the fire station in relation to the WIS 29/40 <sup>th</sup> St. intersection is important for emergency response times, officials feel that access across WIS 29 at this location should be preserved.

		See Appendix E, Chippewa Fire Protection District Correspondence
<b>Dunn County Highway Department</b>	N	The Dunn County Highway Department was given the opportunity to provide comments through all phases of the project. Highway officials were invited to participate in all local official meetings as well as all public information meetings.
<b>Dunn County Emergency Medical Services</b>	N	The Dunn County Local Emergency Planning Committee was given the opportunity to provide comments through all phases of the project.
<b>Town of Wheaton Board</b>	N	Town of Wheaton officials were invited to participate in all local official meetings as well as all public information meetings. The town chairperson has indicated that the town is supportive of the Proposed Action.
<b>Town of Elk Mound Board</b>	N	Town of Elk Mound officials were invited to participate in all local official meetings as well as all public information meetings. The town chairperson has indicated that the town is supportive of the Proposed Action.
<b>Village of Elk Mound Board</b>	N	Village of Elk Mound officials were invited to participate in all local official meetings as well as all public information meetings. The village president has indicated that the town is supportive of the Proposed Action.
<b>Elk Mound Area School District</b>	Y	Officials from the Elk Mound Area School District indicated that conversion of WIS 29 to a freeway segment will add further complication to efficient bussing service. The district prefers that an interchange option be located at County H rather than 40 <sup>th</sup> St. to maximize efficiency in bussing children to and from the school.
		See Appendix F, Elk Mound Area School District Correspondence

#### FEDERAL AGENCY

<b>Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP)</b>	N	N/A
<b>Corps of Engineers (USACE)</b>	Y	The USACE has been given the opportunity to comment throughout all phases of the project. Agency officials were invited to the agency scoping meeting held in August 2002. The USACE underwent a staff transition between the time the project began and after the Preferred Alternative was selected. The USACE was again contacted in November 2003 and requested a review copy of the EA.  See Appendix G, USACE Correspondence
<b>Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)</b>	N	The EPA was invited to the agency scoping meeting. Agency officials were invited to provide comments throughout all phases of the project.
<b>National Park Service (NPS)</b>	N	N/A
<b>Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)</b>	N	The NRCS was invited to the agency scoping meeting. Agency officials were invited to provide comments throughout all phases of the project. Form AD – 1006 would be submitted to the NRCS as part of the final design/construction process if/when federal funding is allocated for implementation of the Proposed Action.  See Appendix H, Form AD-1006
<b>US Coast Guard (USCG)</b>	N	N/A
<b>US Fish &amp; Wildlife Service (US F&amp;W)</b>	Y	Coordination with the US F&W revealed that species of concern in Chippewa and Dunn Counties include the bald eagle (threatened status) and the Karner Blue Butterfly (endangered status). Coordination would occur closer to design/construction to determine the presence of species and/or critical habitat in the area of influence of the Proposed Action.  See Appendix I, US F&W Correspondence
<b>Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)</b>	N	FHWA was invited to the agency scoping meeting. Agency officials were invited to provide comments throughout all phases of the project.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS	<b>EFFECTS</b> Adverse Benefit None NOT Applicable (Blacked out cells in this column require a check in at least one of the other columns.)				COMMENTS
<b>SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS</b>					
A. General Economics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		The Proposed Action Would: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure the economic viability of the area by promoting safe and efficient transportation, both on WIS 29 and the local and county roadway system.</li> <li>Accommodate the current and planned economic growth/development for the area.</li> <li>Eliminate dangerous cross, merge, and diverge traffic to/from WIS 29 and side roads.</li> <li>Ensure safe and efficient access of police, fire, and emergency services to the area.</li> <li>Encourage and promote cooperative planning for land use and transportation systems.</li> <li>Provide safe and efficient transport of goods on a major commercial arterial facility (WIS 29).</li> <li>Provide safe access to opposite sides of WIS 29 for agricultural equipment and other slow moving vehicles.</li> <li>Require major capital investment by WisDOT that would not be able to be expended elsewhere.</li> <li>Cause temporary disruptions during construction.</li> <li>Slightly increase travel times to/from certain locations of the project study area (access to and across WIS 29 would be limited).</li> </ul> See General Economics Factor Sheet, pg. 1
B. Community & Residential	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The Proposed Action would: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Modify and/or eliminate existing WIS 29 intersections with county and local roads thereby improving the safety for traffic crossing WIS 29, as well as, traffic using WIS 29.</li> <li>Be consistent with current and planned land use in the area.</li> <li>Maintain a high level of emergency service to residents of the area by providing efficient access to the town of Wheaton Fire Station and Elk Mound Fire Department.</li> <li>Require three residential relocations, and strip acquisition of agriculture/residential property.</li> <li>Require the removal and/or acquisition of three private driveways along WIS 29 for safety reasons.</li> <li>Cause slight changes in traffic circulation within the project study area as a result of changes to WIS 29 intersections.</li> <li>Create the potential for slight indirection for some locations within the project study area.</li> <li>Cause temporary disruptions during construction.</li> </ul> See Community and Residential Factor Sheet, pg. 5
C. Economic Development and Business	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The Proposed Action would: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide safe and efficient transport of goods on a major commercial arterial facility (WIS 29).</li> <li>Maintain a high level of emergency service to residents of the area by providing efficient access to the town of Wheaton Fire Station and the Elk</li> </ul>

					<p>Mound Fire Department.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide a safe/efficient transportation system for commuters traveling to/from places of employment in the region.</li> <li>Not affect highway-dependent businesses.</li> <li>Require major capital investment by WisDOT that would not be able to be expended elsewhere.</li> <li>Cause temporary disruptions during construction.</li> <li>Be consistent with existing and planned land uses along the WIS 29 corridor.</li> </ul> <p>See Economic Development and Business Factor Sheet, pg. 20</p>
<b>D. Agriculture</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The Proposed Action would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist in ensuring safe and efficient access to farm operations bisected by WIS 29.</li> <li>Require acquisition of agricultural land from 14 farm operations.</li> <li>Not require an Agricultural Impact Statement at this time.</li> </ul> <p>See Agriculture Factor Sheet, pg. 24</p>
<b>E. Environmental Justice</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>This document is in compliance with U.S. DOT and FHWA policies to determine whether a proposed project would have induced socioeconomic impacts or any adverse impacts on minority or low-income populations; and it meets the requirements of Executive Order on Environmental Justice 12898 – “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice on Minority and Low-Income Populations”. Neither minority nor low-income populations would receive disproportionately high or adverse impacts as a result of the preferred alternative. The majority of the community and residential population are supportive of the Proposed Action.</p> <p>See Environmental Justice Factor Sheet, pg. 27</p>

## NATURAL ENVIRONMENT FACTORS

<b>F. Wetlands</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Approximately 3.94 acres (1.59 ha) of wetland could be affected. Wetlands would be delineated by WisDOT/WDNR closer to design/construction to determine the exact amount and location of wetlands impacted by the Proposed Action. Following that determination, a wetland mitigation plan would be developed to document the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The impacted wetland acreage by wetland type.</li> <li>The plan for on-site restoration and anticipated compensation acreage.</li> <li>The proposal for debiting the remaining compensation acreage to a WisDOT wetland mitigation bank site in accordance with provisions of the WisDOT Wetland Mitigation Banking Technical Guidelines.</li> </ul> <p>The Proposed Action uses existing local roadway alignments to determine the locations of overpass crossings of WIS 29. Use of existing alignments minimizes impacts to wetlands and streams located within the project area that cross and/or run parallel to WIS 29. In some cases, wetlands are located on both sides of the existing alignment. Moving overpass locations to new alignments could impact a greater amount of wetland (and other natural and cultural) resources than staying on the existing local roadway alignments. In areas where frontage road alignments needed to be altered to accommodate the new overpasses, alignments were designed in such a manner as to avoid wetlands to the greatest extent possible and still maintain a safe design. In addition, wetland impacts were minimized to the extent possible by using the minimum possible slopes for overpasses allowed by WisDOT design standards.</p> <p>See Wetlands Factor Sheet, pg. 28</p>
<b>G. Streams &amp; Floodplains</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Elk Creek (12.1 miles (19.5 km)) crosses the project study area and is classified as a class 1 Brown Trout stream. In addition, there are three other stream crossings of WIS 29 by tributaries of Elk Creek. Sherman Creek also crosses WIS 29 just west of the WIS 29/County T intersection.</p> <p>The Proposed Action does not include crossings of Elk Creek or Sherman Creek. Two existing crossings of an unnamed intermittent tributary of Elk Creek would be widened to accommodate overpass approach slopes. The locations of these crossings are just south of the WIS 29/County H(N)/970<sup>th</sup> St. intersection and the WIS 29/10<sup>th</sup> St./1010<sup>th</sup> St. intersection.</p> <p>The Federally listed Bald Eagle and Karner Blue Butterfly are known to exist in</p>

					<p>Chippewa and Dunn Counties. The State listed Blanding's Turtle and Wood Turtle are known to exist near portions of Elk Creek. Coordination with US F&amp;W and WDNR would occur closer to design/construction of the Proposed Action to determine the presence of threatened and/or endangered species and critical habitat.</p> <p>A USACE Section 404 Non-Reporting General Permit (GP) would be required for the project.</p> <p>The Proposed Action would not affect the use of a floodplain.</p> <p>See Streams and Floodplains Factor Sheet, pg. 34</p>
<b>H. Lakes or Other Open Water</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Lakes and/or open water bodies are not present and would not be affected as a result of implementing the Proposed Action.</p>
<b>I. Upland Habitat</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>The primary upland habitat of concern is for oak savanna, however, the majority of this habitat type has been converted to agricultural use as a result of early settlement patterns. It is anticipated that the Proposed Action would not affect any remaining undisturbed remnants of oak savanna upland habitat that may be present within the project study area.</p>
<b>J. Erosion Control</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Standard WisDOT erosion control methods would be used during construction as per WisDOT Standard Specifications for highway and structure construction. Coordination with WDNR would also occur closer to design/construction for compliance with TRANS 401 and the WisDOT/WDNR cooperative agreement. Temporary and permanent erosion control methods would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Silt fence and/or silt screen at the toe of fill slopes to avoid accumulation in wetland areas.</li> <li>▪ Erosion mat for sheet flow conditions on long fill slopes adjacent to wetland areas.</li> <li>▪ Inlet protection measures at all crossing culverts and area drains as required.</li> <li>▪ Temporary ditch checks, erosion mat and rip rap would be used as appropriate for ditch and swale drainage that may transmit silt to adjacent wetlands.</li> <li>▪ Permanent seed or sod would be used on finished topsoil surfaces.</li> </ul> <p>An Erosion Control Implementation Plan (EICP) would be prepared by the contractor and approved by WisDOT prior to construction. WDNR would be given the opportunity to review the EICP and provide comments.</p> <p>See Erosion Control Factor Sheet, pg. 38</p>
<b>K. Storm Water management</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>A Stormwater Management Plan would be developed with coordination from WDNR to reduce or minimize runoff effects to surrounding waters of the State from construction of the Proposed Action. Construction site erosion and sediment control would be part of the project's design and construction as set forth in TRANS 401 Wis. Adm. Code and the WisDOT/WDNR Cooperative Agreement.</p> <p>See Storm Water Management Factor Sheet, pg. 41</p>

## PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT FACTORS

<b>L. Air Quality</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<p>This project is exempt from permit requirements under Wisconsin Administrative Code – Chapter NR 411. No substantial impacts to air quality are expected.</p> <p>See Air Quality Factor Sheet, pg.44</p>
<b>M. Construction Stage Sound Quality</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<p>To reduce the potential impact of construction noise, the special provisions for this project will require that motorized equipment shall be operated in compliance with all applicable local, state, and federal laws and regulations relating to noise levels.</p> <p>See Construction Stage Sound Quality Factor Sheet, pg. 46</p>
<b>N. Traffic Noise</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<p>A traffic noise analysis is not required for the Proposed Action. No effects are anticipated per Wisconsin Administrative Code – TRANS 405.</p> <p>A noise analysis was completed in 1997 as part of the EIS for construction of this segment of WIS 29. Conversion of WIS 29 to a freeway section would not result in a substantial shift of traffic to other roadways. A new noise analysis is not needed.</p> <p>See Traffic Noise Factor Sheet, pg. 48</p>

## CULTURAL ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

<b>O. Section, 4(f) and , 6(f.)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Elk Creek State Fishery Area crosses the central portion of the project area. The fishery extends 6 miles (9.66 km) north and 5 miles (8.05 km) south of WIS 29 and is comprised of both private and state owned lands. Elk Creek is the primary water body running through the fishery and is classified as a Class I Brown Trout Stream.</p>
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					<p>The Proposed Action would not affect the Elk Creek State Fishery Area boundary as defined by the Elk Creek Fishery Area Master Plan Concept Element, existing easements along Elk Creek, or state owned lands.</p> <p>Muddy Creek State Wildlife Area is located 2 miles (3.22 km) west of the village of Elk Mound. The 4,351 acre (1,761 ha) wildlife area is 6 miles (9.66 km) long and 2.5 miles (4.02 km) wide. Though a portion of the project area extends into the wildlife area, the Proposed Action would not affect the resource.</p> <p>A public park is located adjacent to WIS 29 near the WIS 29/40th St. intersection. The town park, purchased in 1977, includes the town of Wheaton Fire Station and is 20 acres (8.1 ha) in size. The Proposed Action would not affect the park as part of its implementation.</p> <p>See Appendix J, Elk Creek Fisheries Management Plan – Concept Element.</p>
<b>P. Historic Resources</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Two previously undocumented historical sites, the Jensen Historic site (47DN348), and the Garr Historic site (47DN 349), were identified during the course of the historic/archeological survey. As none of the newly identified historic sites meet the minimum criteria for listing in the NHRP, additional investigations are not recommended at any of the sites.</p> <p>Based upon the results of the archeological investigations, it is unlikely that the Proposed Action would have an adverse effect on the cultural resource base of the project area.</p> <p>The Section 106 review form has been submitted to SHPO for approval.</p> <p>See Appendix K, Section 106 Review, Archeological/Historical Information Form.</p>
<b>Q. Archaeological Resources</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>One previously undocumented archeological site, the Maple Leaf isolated find site (47DN50), was identified during the course of the historic/archeological survey. As the newly identified archeological site does not meet the minimum criteria for listing in the NHRP, additional investigations are not recommended.</p> <p>Based upon the results of the archeological investigations, it is unlikely that the Proposed Action would have an adverse effect on the cultural resource base of the project area.</p> <p>The Section 106 review form has been submitted to SHPO for approval.</p> <p>See Appendix K, Section 106 Review, Archeological/Historical Information Form.</p>
<b>R. Hazardous Substances or UST's</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>An initial Phase I or Reconnaissance and Record Search was conducted on properties within 0.25 mile (0.40 km) of the proposed WIS 29 right-of-way located in the town of Elk Mound, Dunn County, and the town of Wheaton, Chippewa County, Wisconsin. Fourteen properties were initially evaluated as hazardous materials sites with potential adverse environmental impact to the project. The evaluation included a site visit to observe site conditions, review of Federal and State environmental record databases, review of historic topographic maps and aerial photographs, and conduct interviews with regulatory personnel and persons knowledgeable of the project location to assess current and former operations.</p> <p>Four properties located adjacent to or within 0.25 mile (0.40 km) of the proposed WIS 29 right-of-way were identified as having potential environmental concerns within the corridor. None of the sites have been identified on environmental databases, however, each property has historic land use that may warrant environmental concern. The four sites with potential adverse environmental impacts to the project include three farm operations and an electrical sub station.</p> <p>See Hazardous Substances or UST's Factor Sheet, pg. 49</p>
<b>S. Aesthetics</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<p>The Proposed Action would not cause a substantial alteration to the visual character of the landscape as a whole. The Proposed Action would occur within and/or adjacent to the existing corridor, and though additional structures could be added over WIS 29, they would be similar to the existing structures along the corridor.</p> <p>See Aesthetics Factor Sheet, pg. 50</p>
<b>T. Coastal Zone</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The Proposed Action is not located within a coastal zone.
<b>U. Other</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	None.

**ENVIRONMENTAL COST MATRIX**  
**Transportation Improvements**

Environmental  Issue	Unit  Measure	Alternatives/Sections			
		No Build	Alternative A	Alternative B	Preferred Alternative C
<b>Project Length</b>	Mi (Km)		9.25 (14.88)	9.25 (14.88)	9.25 (14.88)
<b>Cost \$</b>					
Construction	Million \$	0	7.737	5.712	10.227
Real Estate	Million \$	0	0.509	0.452	0.675
Total	Million \$	0	8.246	6.165	10.902
<b>Land Conversions</b>					
Total Area Converted to R/W	Acres (Hectares)	N/A	36.9 (14.93)	26.5 (10.72)	50.1 (20.27)
Wetland Area Converted to R/W	Acres (Hectares)	N/A	2.3 (0.93)	1.3 (0.53)	3.5 (1.42)
Upland Area Converted to R/W	Acres (Hectares)	N/A	34.6 (14.00)	25.2 (10.20)	46.6 (18.86)
Other Area Converted to R/W	Acres (Hectares)	N/A	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Real Estate</b>					
Number of Farms Affected	Number	0	13	8	16
Total Area From Farm Operations Required	Acres (Hectares)	N/A	28.2 (11.41)	22.3 (9.02)	48.8 (19.75)
AIS Required?	Yes/No	No	No	No	No
Farmland Rating	Score	N/A	58	60	57
Total Buildings Required	Number	0	5	3	6
Housing Units Required	Number	0	3	3	3
Commercial Units Required	Number	0	0	0	0
Other Buildings or Structures Required	Number (Type)	0	0	0	3 (Outbuildings)
<b>Environmental Issues</b>					
Flood Plain	Yes/No	No	No	No	No
Stream Crossings	Number	0	0	0	0
Endangered Species	Yes/No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Historic Properties	Number	0	0	0	0
Archeological Sites	Number	0	0	0	0
106 MOA Required?	Yes/No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
4(f) Evaluation Required?	Yes/No	No	No	No	No
Environ Justice At Issue?	Yes/No	No	No	No	No
Air Quality Permit?	Yes/No	No	No	No	No
Design Year Noise Sensitive Receptors					
No Impact	Number	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Impacted	Number				
Exceed dBA Levels	Number				
Potential Contaminated Sites	Number	4	4	4	4

**8) Describe how the project development process complied with Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice. (EO 12898 requires agencies to achieve environmental justice by identifying and addressing disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects on minority populations and low-income populations, including the interrelated social and economic effects. Include those covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Age Discriminate)**

**a) Identify sources of data used to determine presence of minority populations and low-income populations.**

- ☒ Windshield Survey      ☐ Survey Questionnaire      ☐ Door to door
- ☐ WisDOT Real Estate      ☒ US Census Data
- ☐ Real Estate Company - Identify Real Estate Company
- ☐ Human resource Agency - Identify agency
- ☐ Official Plan - Identify Plan, Approval Authority, and Date of Approval:

**b) Indicate whether a minority population or a low-income population, including the elderly and the disabled, is in the project's area of influence.**

**i) The requirements of EO 12898 are met if both "No" boxes are checked below**

- ☒ No minority population in project's area of influence.
- ☒ No low-income population in project's area of influence

**ii) If either or both of the "Yes" boxes are checked, item c below must be completed**

- ☐ Yes, a minority population is within the project's area of influence
- ☐ Yes, a low-income population is within project's area of influence.

**c) How was information on the Proposed Action communicated to the minority and/or low-income population(s)? Check all that apply.**

- ☒ Advertising      ☐ Brochures      ☐ Newsletter      ☒ Notices      ☐ Utility Bill Stuffers
- ☐ E-mail      ☐ Public Service Announcements      ☒ Direct Mailings      ☐ Key Person
- ☐ Other (Identify):

**d) Identify how input from the minority population and/or low-income population obtained? Check all that apply.**

- ☐ Mailed Survey      ☐ Door-to-door interview      ☐ Focus Group Research
- ☒ Public Meeting      ☐ Public Hearing      ☐ Key Person Interview
- ☐ Targeted Small Group Informational Meeting      ☐ Targeted Workshop/Conference
- ☐ Other (Identify):

**e) Indicate any special provisions made to encourage participation from the minority population and/or low-income population(s)**

- ☐ Interpreter      ☐ Listening Aids      ☒ Accessibility for Elderly and Disabled
- ☐ Transportation Provided      ☐ Child Care Provided      ☐ Sign Language
- ☒ Other (Identify): Meeting location held near the project

**9) Briefly summarize the status and results of public involvement. Briefly describe how the public involvement process complied with EO 12898 on Environmental Justice.**

There have been a variety of public involvement techniques utilized to involve and obtain input from the public and other stakeholders with an interest in the Proposed Action.

**Public involvement to date**

- 1) Agency scoping letter and kick-off meeting.
- 2) Holding three, open format, Public Information Meetings (PIM's).
- 3) Holding numerous Local Official Meetings to update them on the project status and review goals/exhibits of upcoming PIM's.
- 4) Using the mass media to schedule and announce meetings, press releases, etc.
- 5) Using exhibits and documentary handout materials at the public information meetings
- 6) Using sign-in sheets at PIM's to maintain a mailing database for invitations to future PIM's
- 7) Using direct mailings to all property owners within one-mile of WIS 29 inviting them to PIM's
- 8) Monitoring the local newspaper (*Eau Claire Leader-Telegram*)

**Anticipated future public involvement**

- 1) Making environmental documents available to the public for comment
- 2) Offering the public an opportunity to request a public hearing

**Public Involvement Log**

- On-going – Toll-free telephone & email availability – public access to project team
- On-going – Public participation and agency/utility coordination database mailing & issues list
- On-going – Project team availability for conducting small group meetings with local officials, state agencies, property owners and residents, and interest groups as needed/requested.
- On-going – Monitoring of *Eau Claire Leader-Telegram*
- August 28, 2002 – Agency Scoping meeting
- October 2, 2002 – Public Information Meeting #1
- November 7, 2002 – Local Officials Meetings in Dunn and Chippewa Counties
- January 9, 2003 – Public Information Meeting #2
- March 14, 2003 – WDNR meeting
- March 31, 2003 – WisDOT meeting with village and town of Elk Mound
- June 13, 2003 – WisDOT meeting with village and town of Elk Mound
- August 8, 2003 – WisDOT meeting with village and town of Elk Mound
- November 19, 2003 – Public Information Meeting #3

**a) Identify groups (e.g., elderly, handicapped), minority populations and low-income populations that participated in the public involvement process. This would include any organizations and special interest groups.**

Elderly individuals participated in the public involvement meetings. The area is devoid of significant populations of low income or minority populations to target as a group for participation in public involvement activities.

**b) Describe, briefly, the issues, if any, identified by any groups, minority populations and/or low-income populations during the public involvement process.**

Issues presented by the public included, safety issues (especially increased response time), higher

development demand for property near WIS 29, overpass availability to access north/south sides of WIS 29, and the poor design of the US 12/WIS 40 interchange (inadequate sight-lines for semis using the interchange).

**c) Briefly describe how the issues identified above were addressed. Include a discussion of those that were avoided as well as those that were minimized and those that are to be mitigated. Include a brief discussion of proposed mitigation, if any.**

The Proposed Action was developed with the above concerns in mind and every attempt was made to address these concerns.

# **10) Briefly describe the results of coordination with local units of government.**

**a) Identify local units of government contacted and provide the date coordination was initiated.**

Government	Date of Coordination m/dd/yyyy
Chippewa County, Dunn County	8/28/2002
Village of Elk Mound	8/28/2002
Town of Elk Mound	8/28/2002
Town of Wheaton	8/28/2002
Chippewa County Local Emergency Planning Committee	8/28/2002
Dunn County Emergency Medical Services	8/28/2002
Towns of Elk Mound and Wheaton Fire Departments	11/7/2002

**b) Describe, briefly, the issues, if any, identified by local units of government during the public involvement process.**

The local units of government identified the following issues during the public involvement process:

- Compatibility of the project with local land use planning
- Access to the village of Elk Mound
- Provision of emergency services
- Agricultural vehicle and equipment circulation
- Accommodation of a future interchange

**c) Briefly describe how the issues identified above were addressed. Include a discussion of those that were avoided as well as those that were minimized and those that are to be mitigated. Include a brief discussion of proposed mitigation, if any.**

1) Compatibility of the project with local land use planning:

Based on an analysis of the Village of Elk Mound Comprehensive Plan, it was determined that the Proposed Action would support the growth areas of the village and would aid in the maintenance of agricultural land. Project staff worked with local officials to ensure that the project did not adversely affect the village's land use planning goals.

2) Access to the village of Elk Mound:

The existing interchanges will continue to provide a high level of access to the village of Elk Mound under the Proposed Action. The proposed grade separations would provide north/south traffic circulation to/from the village and the surrounding unincorporated areas.

3) Provision of emergency services:

Numerous project meetings were held with local emergency responders to collect their input on the Proposed Action. Their input was a major consideration as the location of grade separations was developed. The Proposed Action would allow emergency responders to circulate north/south of WIS 29 with minimal delays in travel time and indirection. The grade separations would provide access to the north and south frontage roads.

4) Agricultural vehicle and equipment circulation:

The Proposed Action includes four grade separations that would help agricultural vehicles travel between the north and south sides of WIS 29. Local officials were initially concerned that the Proposed Action would

cause unreasonable travel indirection for farmers and support vehicles. However, the Proposed Action includes grade separations near the properties that were identified as having farms and/or buildings on both the north and south sides of WIS 29. These grade separations would allow direct connections to farms and/or buildings.

5) Accommodation of a future interchange:

Based on rural interchange spacing guidelines, and proximity to existing urbanized areas, there was only one existing road location that is a logical location for a future interchange. Because there is currently no need for a new interchange in the project study area, WisDOT would not include the provision of an interchange as part of the Proposed Action. However, the local units of government would have the capacity to officially map a future interchange if they so choose.

### TRAFFIC SUMMARY

	ALTERNATE	Alternative C – Preferred Alternative	Alternative C – Preferred Alternative	Alternative C – Preferred Alternative
	SEGMENT TERMINI	WIS 29 between I-94 and WIS 40	WIS 29 between WIS 40 and 40 <sup>th</sup> St.	WIS 29 between 40 <sup>th</sup> St. and County T
TRAFFIC VOLUMES Existing	ADT Yr. 2001	7,300	8,200	N/A
Const. Year	ADT Yr. 2005	8,100	8,900	7,700
Const. Plus 10 Yr.	ADT Yr. 2015	9,200	11,000	9,400
Design Year	ADT Yr. 2025	10,300	13,000	11,100
	DHV Yr. 2025	1,070	1,350	1,150
TRAFFIC FACTORS	K <sub>100</sub>	10.4	10.4	10.4
	D (%)	62	62	62
	T (% of ADT)	8.6	8.6	8.6
	T (% of DHV)	3.9	3.9	3.9
	Level of Service	A	A	A
SPEEDS Existing	Posted	55	55	55
Design Year	Posted	55	55	55
	Project Design Speed	60	60	60
OTHER (specify)				

ADT = Average Daily Traffic

K<sub>100/200</sub> or % = K<sub>100</sub> = Rural, K<sub>200</sub> = Urban, % = ADT in DHV

T = Trucks

P = % ADT in Peak hour

DHV = Design Hourly Volume

D = % DHV in predominate direction  
of travel

K<sub>8</sub> = % ADT occurring in the average of the 8 highest consecutive hours of traffic on an average day.

(Only required when a carbon monoxide analysis must be performed per Wisconsin Administrative Code - Chapter NR 411.)

## ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Indicate whether the issue listed below is a concern for the Proposed Action or alternative. If the issue is a concern, explain how it is to be addressed or where it is addressed in this environmental document.

### 1) Stimulation of secondary environmental effects.

☒ **No** - Substantial secondary environmental effects will not be stimulated.

The WIS 29 Freeway Conversion is consistent with local land use plans and controls where they exist in the project study area. Agriculture is the primary land use in the vicinity of WIS 29 with some areas of residential development. The Proposed Action would continue to support the existing agricultural and residential activities. Planned land use calls for the area to remain predominantly agricultural in nature. Conversion of WIS 29 to a freeway through the elimination of direct access from side roads and private driveways would support the planned agricultural preservation. By eliminating direct access to WIS 29, any pressure to develop land near existing at-grade intersections would be significantly reduced. Thus the Proposed Action would actually help preserve agricultural land in the area and would have little or no secondary environmental effects.

☐ **Yes** - Stimulation of substantial secondary environmental effects will occur. Explain or indicate where addressed.

### 2) Creation of a new environmental effect.

☒ **No** - A new environmental effect will not be created.

☐ **Yes** - The project will create a new environmental effect. Explain or indicate where addressed.

### 3) Impacts on geographically scarce resources.

☒ **No** - Geographically scarce resources will not be impacted.

☐ **Yes** - Impacts on geographically scarce resources will occur. Explain or indicate where addressed.

### 4) Precedent-setting nature of the Proposed Action.

☒ **No** - The proposed project does not have a precedent-setting nature.

☐ **Yes** - The proposed project has a precedent-setting nature. Explain or indicate where addressed.

### 5) The degree of controversy associated with the Proposed Action.

☒ **No** - The Proposed Action is not controversial or the level of controversy is low.

☐ **Yes** - The project has a high degree of controversy. Explain or indicate where addressed.

### 6) Conflicts with official agency plans or local, state, or national policies, including conflicts resulting from potential effects of transportation on land use and land use on transportation demand.

☒ **No** - No conflicts with any plans, policies, or land uses will result.

☐ **Yes** - Conflicts with plans, policies or land uses will result. Explain or indicate where addressed.

### 7) Cumulative environmental impacts of repeated actions of the type proposed.

☒ **No** - The Proposed Action will not contribute to cumulative environmental impacts of repeated actions.

☐ **Yes** - Cumulative environmental impacts will result from repeated actions of the type proposed. Explain or indicate where addressed.

## ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITMENTS

Identify and describe any commitments made to protect the environment. Indicate when the commitment should be implemented and who in WisDOT would have jurisdiction to assure fulfillment for each commitment.

**A. General Economics** No Commitments Needed

**B. Community & Residential** No Commitments Needed

**C. Economic Development** No Commitments Needed

**D. Agriculture** Commitments Made – Form AD – 1006 would be submitted to the NRCS as part of the final design/construction process if/when federal funding is allocated for implementation of the Proposed Action.

**E. Environmental Justice** Not Applicable

**F. Wetlands** Commitments Made – The potential for on-site wetland mitigation exists in two locations: 1) Where small segments of the existing frontage road would be removed/relocated. 2) The two forested parcels (40 acre parcels) near the western end of the project study area where access and/or the entire parcel may be acquired. WisDOT could explore the potential for on-site wetland mitigation at the locations closer to design/construction of the Proposed Action.

**G. Streams & Floodplains** No Commitments Needed

**H. Lakes or Other Open Water** Not Applicable

**I. Upland Habitat** Not Applicable

**J. Erosion Control**

**K. Storm Water management**

**L. Air Quality** Not Applicable – The project is exempt from permit requirements per Wisconsin Administrative Code – Chapter NR 411 criteria.

**M. Construction Stage Sound Quality** Commitments Made - To reduce the potential impact of Construction Noise, the special provisions for this project will require that motorized equipment shall be operated in compliance with all applicable local, state and federal laws and regulations relating to noise levels permissible within and adjacent to the project construction site. At a minimum, the special provisions will require that motorized construction equipment shall not be operated between 10:00 PM and 6:00 AM without prior written approval of the project engineer. All motorized construction equipment will be required to have mufflers constructed in accordance with the equipment manufacturer's specifications or a system of equivalent noise reducing capacity. It will also be required that mufflers and exhaust systems be maintained in good working order, free from leaks or holes. See the Air Quality Factor Sheet, pg. 44.

**N. Traffic Noise** Not Applicable

**O. Section, 4(f) and 6(f).** Not Applicable

**P. Historic Resources** Not Applicable

**Q. Archaeological Resources** Not Applicable

**R. Hazardous Substances or UST's** No Commitments Needed

**S. Aesthetics** No Commitments Needed

**T. Coastal Zone**

Not Applicable

**U. Other**

Not Applicable – Because the preservation for a potential new interchange is NOT included as part of the Proposed Action or this Environmental Assessment, it is likely that additional environmental analysis and documentation would be required if/when such an initiative would be pursued.